

# City revives old tradition in ceremony

HOLLY A. HEYSER / STAFF  
REDWOOD CITY

If the city's founders could be at Union Cemetery Monday, only the cars would seem out of place.

And if the traffic weren't enough to scare them into the nearest available grave, they would see a Memorial Day ceremony much like those that have been held there since the cemetery opened in 1859.

A tradition revived seven years ago by the city's Archives Committee, the event will feature school children singing, a recitation of the Gettysburg Address, the laying flowers on graves and a rendition of the ever-soulful Taps.

And just like in the old days, all of the children who participate will be given ice cream when they're done.

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m.

Jean Cloud, chairwoman of the Archives Committee, said when the committee began asking the city's oldest residents what should be done to preserve Redwood City's history, one thing they all remembered was participating in the Memorial Day ceremony as school children.

"You can't believe how many people told us that same story" she said.

Mayor Georgi LaBerge, who will also participate in the ceremony, is glad to see the school children carrying on one of the community's traditions.

"I think it's very important that the school children are involved in the ceremony," she said. "I think it's important for them to get a sense of history. It gives them a sense of place."

Please see REVIVE, B-5

## REVIVE

Continued from B-1

"The kids like doing it, and it's good for them to get involved in the community," said Ed Glazer, principal of Ford Elementary School

More than 50 students from the school's chorus are expected to participate.

In addition to instilling a sense of history in children, Union Cemetery's Memorial Day ceremony represents a growing community interest in preserving the necropolis, which has earned a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

The 6.3 acre plot on Woodside Road west of El Camino Real has been plagued by vandalism for nearly 100 years. Incidents of depredation include everything from the macabre theft of human remains to the repeated attacks on the Civil War soldier statue.

One man apprehended half a century ago for stealing the statue's rifle was actually sent to San Quentin for his crime.

But the pot-metal statue has been toppled and disarmed so many times that it had to be removed for safe-keeping by the San Mateo County Historical Society.

But the Society no longer has the old soldier because it ran out of space for him—Cloud said conspiratorially that she knows where he is, and she isn't telling.

Although she would like to restore the statue, Cloud said, "I don't think the original will ever be put up outdoors because he's too fragile."

Aside from the more sensational acts of vandalism perpetrated against the historic cemetery, many plots have suffered the indignity of having their tombstones broken, toppled or removed altogether.

Some markers still exist, such as the broken tombstone of Christopher Columbus - Christopher Columbus Bollinger, that is. But others are recorded only in the undertaker's record book, like the grave of "an unknown man known as Napoleon Bonaparte."

5/26/1990

# Peninsula Today

Saturday, May 26, 1990



ROD SEARCEY / STAFF

Jean Cloud takes a close look at the broken tombstone on the grave of Christopher Columbus Bollinger in the Union Cemetery in Redwood City Friday.

10/10/1990

# New Plans For Union Cemetery

By SAM BLACKWELL  
Weekly News Staff

Union Cemetery is a twilight zone in the National Register of Historic Places.

The first state law regulating cemeteries was passed to preserve it as a burial ground, hence the historic designation in 1983. But the Union Cemetery Historic Site is not peaceful, surrounded as it is by apartment buildings and buffeted by the continuous whiz of traffic on Woodside Road. And a sense of history can be obscured by the city-owned cemetery's current multiple uses.

A walk through the deserted grounds one day last week turned up: One orange golf ball, one dope pipe (used), one blanket (used), several decomposing sandwiches and some Ritz crackers among the weathered monuments and modern light poles.

A recent cleanup by volunteers uncovered more unusual artifacts, according to Parks and Recreation Commission Chairwoman Susan Swope. They included a Mandarin doll stuck with pins and a cloth penis.

Swope is a member of the Union Cemetery Historic Site Committee, which last month convinced the City Council to commission the state's first-

**Please See Cemetery, Page 13**



**Union Cemetery, the state's first-ever master-planned burial ground, could become an urban park.**  
**Photograph by Augustine Buonocore**

October 10, 1990

# Cemetery

Continued From Page 1

ever cemetery master plan. One possibility is that the plan will recommend turning the cemetery into an urban park, with benches and possibly an interpreter.

Though no one has been buried at the cemetery since 1961 and signs of vandalism abound, new artificial flowers and newly planted trees are evidence that the cemetery is cared for. Nita Spangler and Jean Cloud, also members of the committee along with the county Genealogical Society's Helen Graves, sometimes lead tours of the cemetery for school children.

Slogging through the mud is not a fond memory of last year's Memorial Day observance, Swope said. Yet the fact that people did it shows the community's active interest in the cemetery, which increases its value as a historic site, says Thad Van Buren, an archaeologist with the state Office of Historic Preservation. Few cemeteries are on the National Register because of the strict criteria which must be met, Van Buren says.

The concern is that well-intentioned groups and individuals who want to improve the cemetery's appearance can also harm its historical significance unless they know what they're doing. "People who have tried to restore things have done greater damage," says Van Buren.

The study will be done by a historical archaeologist experienced with cemeteries, and Van Buren has agreed to consult with the city.

Van Buren and Swope are careful with the word "restore." Restoring the cemetery may mean leaving some of the deterioration the way it is rather than transforming the site into a modern showplace. For instance, the large brown patches of earth currently there probably were there all along, Van Buren says.

A landscaping plan that already exists for the cemetery includes a sprinkler system that's "not appropriate," Van Buren says.

But Van Buren likes the idea of turning the cemetery into an urban park. "It could deter vandalism," he said.

But he's also concerned about natural factors that are contributing to the cemetery's deterioration. The roots of large trees planted long, long ago next to grave plots are in some cases toppling monuments all by themselves.

Established in 1859, the cemetery holds an estimated 2,000 bodies, some of them belonging to members of Redwood City's founding families. Though one corner is dedicated to the Union Civil War dead, the cemetery's name reflects the community's affinity for Daniel Webster's pre-war credo "Liberty and Union."

Its most recognizable feature was a statue of a Union soldier erected in 1889. The statue, brittle because it was made of zinc, was vandalized numerous times and finally broke into pieces.

Spangler says the heaviest vandalism of the cemetery occurred during the '60s and '70s. When a crypt was broken into three years ago, police looked into whether a satanic cult was involved and concluded there was no connection.

Too much shouldn't be made of the assorted oddities that turn up at the cemetery, she says.

"It's just a place where people do weird things."

# Landmark cemetery awaits renovation

ROSANNE SPECTOR / STAFF  
REDWOOD CITY

Near the busy intersection of Woodside Road and El Camino Real can be found the ramshackled remains of one of the Bay Area's oldest landmarks of its kind — a cemetery.

But this tree-lined lot known as Union Cemetery, which has served as a final resting place for Peninsulans since 1859, has not weathered the years well.

Grave sites are overgrown. Gravestones are covered with dirt and graffiti, leaving epitaphs unreadable. Other grave markers are broken or missing.

So dilapidated has Union Cemetery become that some families have taken their loved ones' tombstones home for safekeeping.

According to local historian Jean Cloud, a member of the city's ad hoc Union Cemetery Committee, people take stones home to protect them from vandals.

"People take these things," Cloud said. "They say when it's safe they'll take them back to the cemetery."

Over the years, many families have collected their relatives' markers, Cloud said. One family is stowing a stone in their garage for now. Another took home a broken wooden cross that had stood at a relative's plot.

"She said, 'I know it's illegal to take, but I'll bring it back when it's safe,'" Cloud said.

Cloud has grown impatient with city efforts to renovate the cemetery. She said she has begged the City Council for two years to appoint a full-fledged Union Cemetery committee to coordinate volunteer efforts but has received no commitments.

"Even though it's right by the bustle of Woodside Road, it's a peaceful place," Cloud said. "It could be an open-air school

Please see HISTORIC, A-10

## HISTORIC

Continued from A-1

ground. The people buried there tell the history of Redwood City."

The City Council is trying to hire a historical archaeologist to plan a renovation of the cemetery, ridding it of graffiti and broken gravestones. But the application deadline came and went last month, with no takers.

In December, the city sent out about 40 notices to qualified historical archaeologists, hoping to attract applicants for the job of drawing up a plan to preserve the historic graveyard.

The City Council has allocated \$15,000 to pay an archaeologist to inventory the graveyard's monuments and prepare a report including a plan for preservation projects.

The city is counting on a volunteer force to help prepare the plan and carry out its recommendations. The force will be organized

by Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director Peter Griffiths.

The floundering attempt to reel in a qualified archaeologist has Cloud worried.

"This makes me very apprehensive," Cloud said. "I would like them to take another approach."

Cloud thinks the city should allow interested residents to form a committee to begin doing the inventory itself.

"Then we could at least get that," Cloud said.

Inventory information is vital for making a management plan, Cloud said.

"You need to know how many (gravestones) are leaning, how many are in pieces, where the graffiti is," Cloud said. "It tells you the condition of the cemetery."

Also, cemeteries that have been inventoried are more appealing to granting agencies, said Nita Spangler, who also serves on the ad hoc committee.

Cloud is eager to get the ball rolling.



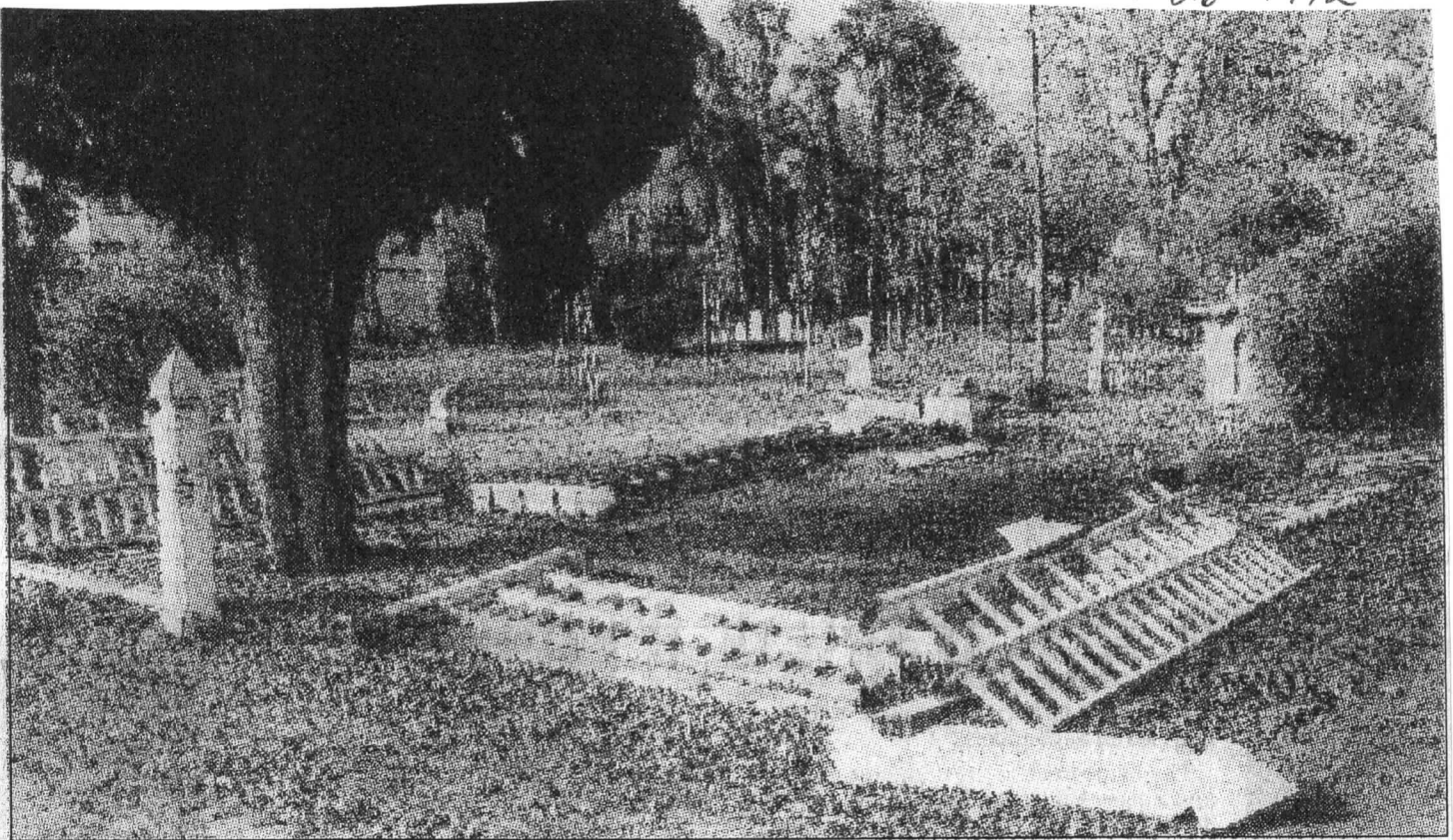
TED FINK / STAFF

Jean Cloud, a local historian, says some relatives of people buried in Union Cemetery have taken home their loved ones' tombstones for safe keeping because they are concerned about

vandalism at the Redwood City cemetery. There has been a history of vandalism at the cemetery. The city is searching for a specialist to plan its renovation.

1-26-1992

CEMETERY



TED FINK / PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

Before the cleanup crew arrived Saturday, Union Cemetery in Redwood City looks a little seedy.

# Cemetery all tidied up, ready for the laser survey

1/26/92

**Veronique Mistiaen**  
PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

Redwood City Councilman Bill Stangel looked satisfied at the long line of brown bags along the gravesite he was busy raking up.

By late morning Saturday

Stangel and 25 other friends of the Union Cemetery Historic Site in Redwood City had filled 50 80-gallon bags with leaves, small branches and debris.

A history buff, Stangel came to the Civil War-era cemetery to help prepare the 6.4-acre triangular site on

Woodside Road for its first aerial photo, to be taken next week. He and other rosy-cheeked workers swept gravesites, raked leaves and pruned shrubs so as many features as possible will be visible for the photo.

The photo will be completed by a laser survey of curbs,

gravesites and tombstones not visible from the plane.

The laser technology — a light beam shot at each corner of the gravesite — records the angles and distance faster and more accurately than the usual tri-

Please see **SURVEY, B-3**

## SURVEY / Aerial photo a research aid

CONTINUED FROM B-1

angulation method, said Redwood City Parks, Recreation and Community Development Director Peter Griffiths.

The \$5,000 survey, which will be performed by the engineering firm of Brian Kangas Foulk & Associates of Redwood City, will help the city develop an accurate inventory of its historical cemetery.

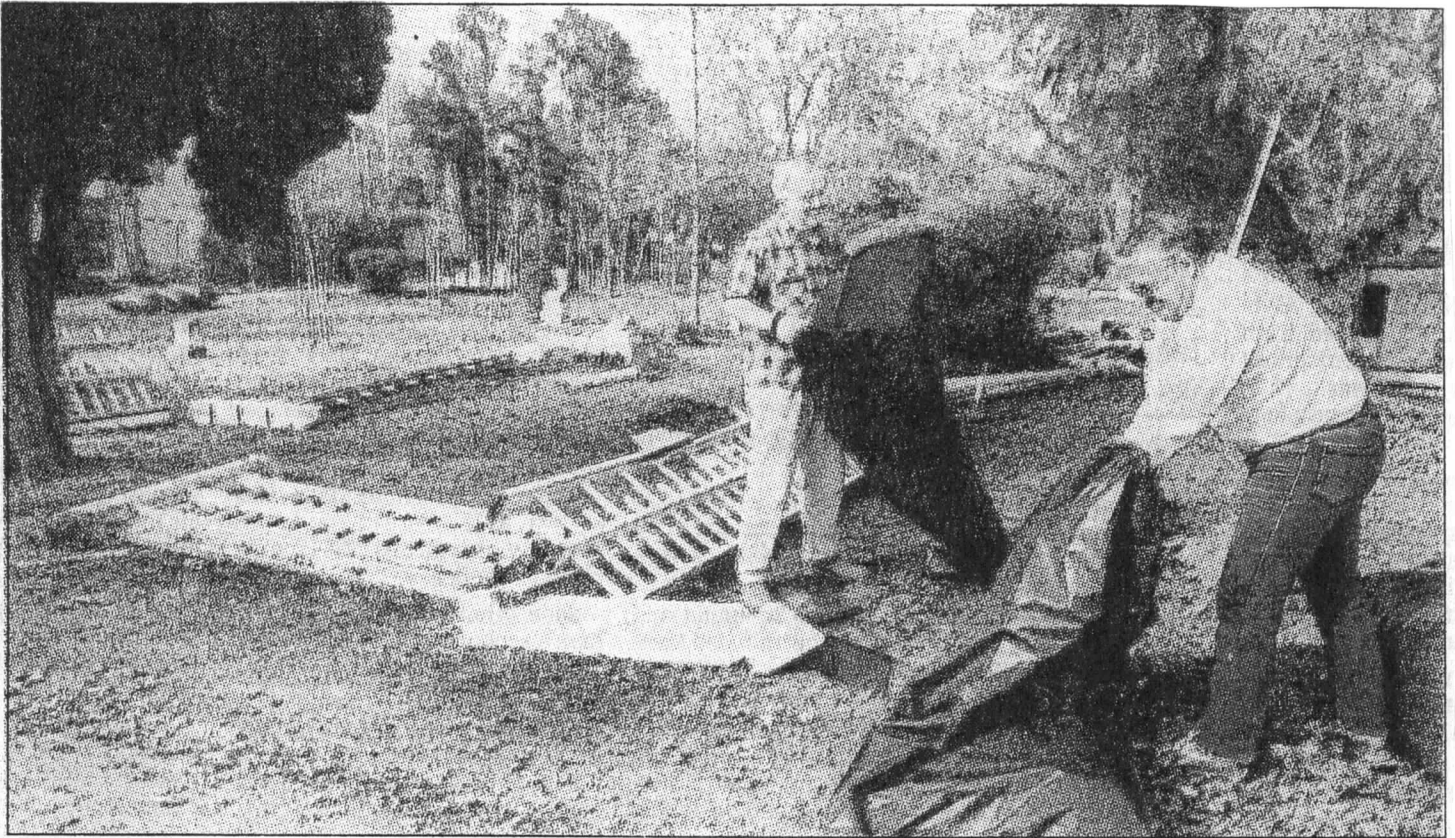
The information, along with archaeological and historical data, will be merged by computer into one file that will serve as a basis for much-needed restoration work and be used by researchers and students, Griffiths said.

Laura Pecalitsky and her 8-year-old nephew Evan McKinney worked fast as a team under the oak trees and willows Saturday. They filled eight bags and cleared many gravesites.

"I had never seen a place so old in my life, besides the Grand Canyon," said McKinney. The first time he had seen the cemetery, he had thought it creepy. Now, he sees it as a "nice place," he said.

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1-26-1992

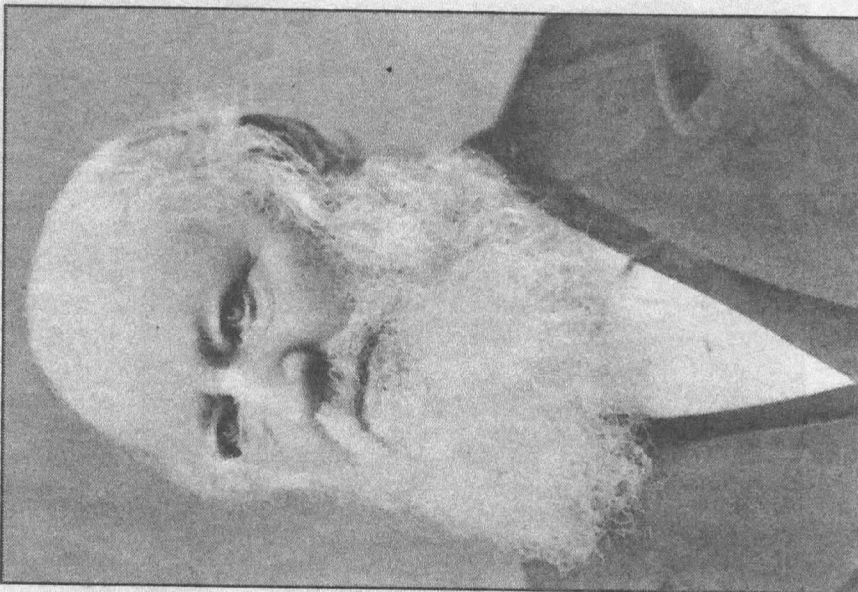


TED FINK / PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

**After a little cleanup work** Saturday by Redwood City Parks and Recreation Commissioner Ed Nordness (left) and Community Services Director Peter Griffiths, the leaves came up, even though the fence stayed down.



The Times  
3-27-1992



## Four who were buried in Union Cemetery

Henry Beeger (left) purchased the Gregg Tannery in Redwood City in 1880. His family transferred his remains from Union Cemetery in Redwood City to Cypress Lawn Memorial Park in Colma . . . Betsy Crane Fox

was the wife of the first San Mateo County judge Benjamin Fox (second from right). Fox was elected judge after San Mateo split from San Francisco in 1862. In 1859, he issued a bench warrant for the arrest of Judge

David Terry after

# Six acres of history . . . beneath the ground

Terry shot Sen. David Broderick

1992

The  
Times

By MICHAEL SVANEVIK  
with SHIRLEY BURGESS

Marshall, 7-year old son of Simon Knight, Redwood City's pioneer stagecoach operator, died amid mysterious circumstances Nov. 1, 1880.

The boy had been sent to his upstairs room early while the rest of the family watched a Republican torchlight election procession. After the parade passed, parents found the lad's room aflame, the bed burning and Marshall dead.

He was interred at Union Cemetery west of town, joined there 16 years later by his prosperous father.

Sheldon "Purdy" Pharis, so-called Shingle King of San Mateo County, was discovered prostrate in final agony on the floor of his room, March 3, 1884. His revolver lay on the floor, one chamber empty. There was a hole through the back of his head.

The coroner called it suicide. Friends whispered murder.

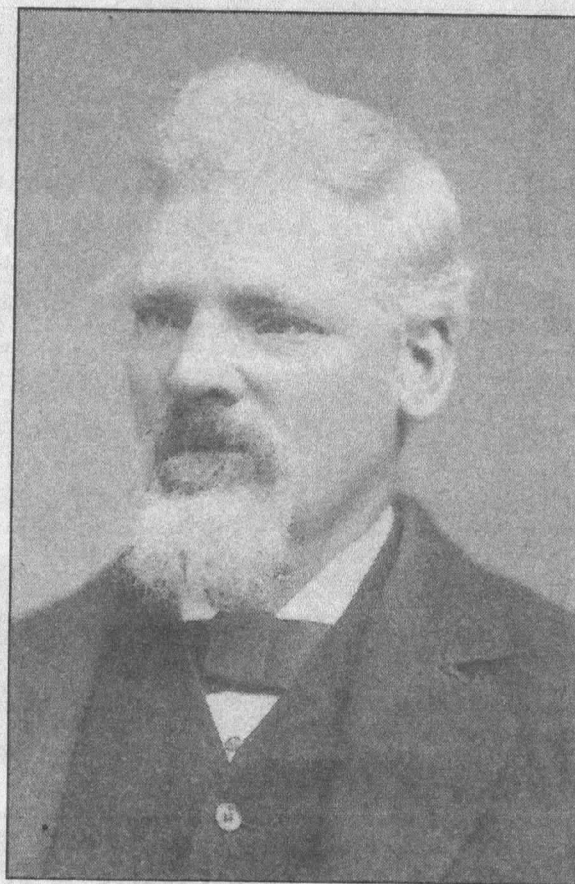
Pharis, who came west with gold rushers of 1853, migrated onto the Peninsula after disappointing success in the mines. He became a lumber entrepreneur in the canyons of the Coast-side.

Early on, his mill cut 30,000 shingles daily. By 1872 output had risen to 50,000 and at its height, 100,000 a day. An extraordinarily successful businessman, at the time of his demise Pharis controlled 6,562 acres from Purissima to Gazos Creek.

He had the respect of the community; two schools were named after him. Still, at the hour of his parting, friends testified he was acting queerly, convinced everyone in the world was against him.

Comrades filled the Redwood City chapel for his funeral service. Scores made up a procession of carriages which followed the hearse to Union Cemetery.

Prussia-born August Eikerkotter immigrated to America in 1834 and to California in 1850. He died in July 1887, at Searsville in San Mateo County. He was 70.



Redwood City Archives Committee

James Hilton (right), pioneer blacksmith, came to Redwood City in 1852 and was buried at Union Cemetery in 1903. ... England-born

## Other Times

Widely regarded as one of that town's founding fathers, whose residency dated from 1853, Eikerkotter ran the local store, tavern and was proprietor of the hotel. He served as a county supervisor. He was buried in a family plot at Union Cemetery, eventually joined by eight members of his family.

Frank Boos, from Germany and veteran of the Mexican War (1846-1848), settled at Searsville during the 1850s and became a pillar of the community.

By 1890 he was father of 13 and a member of the school board. That year he walked to his barn to swallow a generous dose of squirrel-killing strychnine. He found peace at Union Cemetery.

2084

Searsville school itself had been built on land donated by Welshman William Lloyd, who migrated to California via Australia.

Lloyd worked in the mills and as a farmer; later he became the village blacksmith. His Redwood City funeral, 1895, was the largest in town memory. Locals who gathered at the cemetery were amazed by Lloyd's extraordinary estate, rumored to have been in the neighborhood of \$12,000.

Town founder John Sears became a cemetery resident in June, 1907. From New York, he'd opened a roadhouse near Sand Hill and Portola roads in 1853. According to legend, a wandering journalist called the hamlet Searsville and the name stuck.

Sears moved his family out in 1862, into the hills along the stagecoach road to Pescadero, where he built LaHonda Hotel, a name subsequently given to the small community.

Union Cemetery, six acres of history beneath the ground, once the center of Mexican Rancho de las Pulgas, today is located at the busy intersection west of El Camino Real at Woodside Road.

Anna Douglas, 4, daughter of a Redwood City cobbler, was the first burial there in 1859 when the pleasant grounds were encircled by a white picket fence and acres of wheat fields.

Ultimately, approximately 2,000 were laid to rest at Union Cemetery, including 40 Civil War veterans, the last in 1936 — James Baxter who fought at Gettysburg before coming to California as a farmer and veterinarian.

A portion reserved as a potter's field contained approximately 100 unknowns, one registered simply as "Chinaman." Another as "unknown man found hung." Some graves were unmarked.

Grounds contained people from 17 foreign countries and 26 states who came West by covered wagon, around Cape Horn or via the Isthmus of Panama.

Nobody especially noteworthy was ever interred there. This was a people's cemetery. John Coombs, Redwood City's black shoemaker, was buried in 1876, as was Superior Court Judge George Buck, 42 years on the county bench, who presided over

20,000 cases. Interred in 1938, Buck was one of the last to be buried at Union Cemetery.

There was Irish-born contractor James Crowe, who built some of Redwood City's more substantial early structures and during the 1870s opened the county's first mortuary. For 18 years he acted as county coroner and public administrator.

Thomas and William Durham, brothers, in 1857 built the first road from Redwood up to Skyline. Will Durham claimed to have cast the first vote in the county during the election of 1856.

Such patriotic assertions, though questionable, were common. Carpenter William Holder, who lived until 1911, swore he was first to raise the Stars and Stripes in Redwood City.

In an example of 19th century one-upmanship, James Peace, who jumped ship at San Francisco during the 1830s and later farmed near Half Moon Bay, said he was first to hoist the American flag in what became San Mateo County.

Peace asserted he came into possession of the cherished banner from California conqueror

Commodore John Sloat in 1846. True or not, it became his treasure and was wrapped around his body when buried at Union Cemetery after he drowned in an October, 1890, boating accident.

One of Redwood City's first families, when the hamlet was simply called Embarcadero, was William Littlejohn's. Home builder and skilled carpenter, Littlejohn molded the future of the town, divided by Redwood Creek, constructing the original wooden drawbridge across the creek in 1854.

Thrice married Sarah Armstrong Montgomery Green Wallis, renowned as one of California's more "progressive and and strong-minded females," who, as a young girl, crossed the Sierra on horseback in the winter of 1844, was buried in 1905.

The independent woman, abandoned by two husbands, had supported herself in life taking in boarders and laundry. She eventually married lawyer and state senator Joseph Sawyer Wallis. The pair lived in a Victorian mansion in what became Mayfield.

Mrs. Wallis championed equal rights for women. In 1871 she

entertained Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton at her Mayfield home. Two years later she was elected president of the Mayfield Woman Suffrage Association (of the California Woman Suffrage Association).

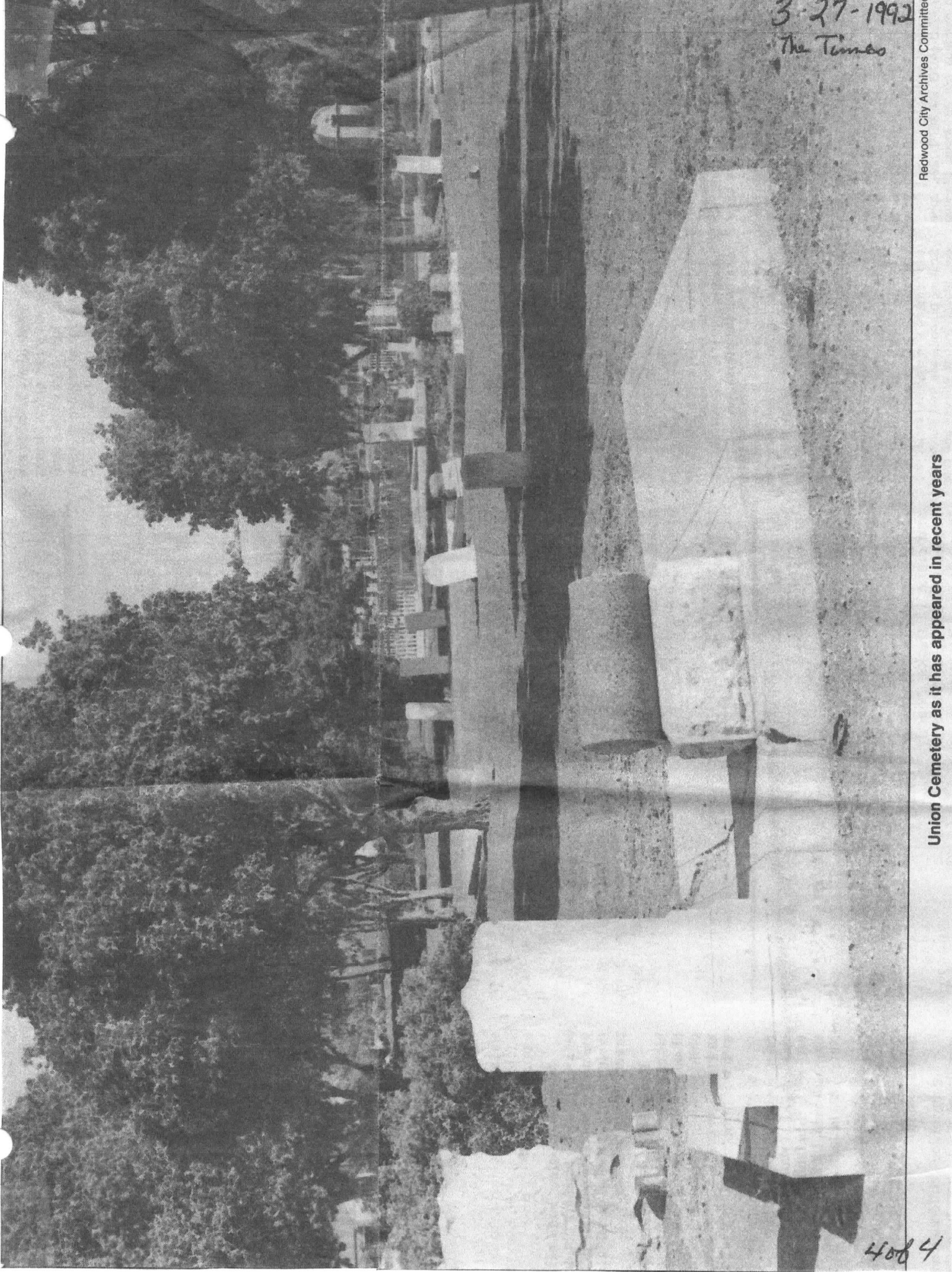
Burials at Union Cemetery after World War I became rare. First reports of serious vandalism, when headstones were broken and fences burned, were filed in 1906.

A 1947 visitor reported the cemetery covered with weeds, trash and debris. A number of discouraged families moved ancestors to better kept sites. Simon M. Mezes, founder of Redwood City who died in 1884, was moved in 1947.

George Winthrop Fox and his family were transferred (1936) to Cypress Lawn Memorial Park in Colma. Son of the first county judge, Fox had been a criminal attorney and district attorney.

Some graves were never marked. A few families removed markers to prevent vandalism and theft. Now it is impossible to locate many graves presumed to be still there.

How many remain is unknown.



3-27-1992  
The Times

Union Cemetery as it has appeared in recent years

4084

# A somber and tragic holiday

5/26/1992 REC.

## Emotional gravesite tributes

Holly A. Heyser  
PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

From the old-fashioned dirt walkways of Redwood City's Union Cemetery to the vast, grassy expanses of Alta Mesa Memorial Park in Palo Alto, Peninsulans turned out solemnly Monday to honor those who died in military service to their country.

At Union Cemetery, more than 130 people took part in a traditional ceremony honoring local casualties of the Civil War.

"Memorial Day in Redwood City has been something that has carried on a tradition of family-oriented days," said keynote speaker and City Councilman Jack Murray.

"It's an opportunity to pass on to the children what you feel about the past."

In a way, the ceremony was itself a piece of the past. Children sang in the warm sunlight and decorated soldiers' graves with flowers, then waited in line for the traditional free cup of ice cream when it was over.

Behind-the-scenes participants included such long-time civic staples as American Legion Post 105, the Masons, the Native Sons of the Golden West and the Independent Order of Oddfellows.

Civic leaders were out in force, including all of the members of the City Council — some of whom had already been to another ceremony

Please see **TRIBUTES, A-10**



JOE PUGLIESE / PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

**A child's tribute to America's war dead** includes placing wreaths on the graves of war dead buried at Union Cemetery in Redwood City. Among the children acknowledging the heroes Monday afternoon is 10-year-old Elizabeth Ayala of Redwood City.

10th 2

5/26/1992

## TRIBUTES / Ceremonies at two sites

CONTINUED FROM A-1

that morning — and county Supervisor and congressional candidate Tom Nolan.

Children from the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts carried the flags, and students from local schools recited the Gettysburg Address, The Blue and the Gray, and a personal essay written in honor of Memorial Day.

When it was Murray's turn to say a few words in front of the cemetery's Civil War memorial, which is the resting place for more than 40 soldiers, he chose the words of Abraham Lincoln.

"Nearly 80 years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration that for some men to enslave others is a (so-called) 'sacred right of self-government,'" Murray said, quoting a speech Lincoln gave in Peoria, Ill., on Oct. 16, 1854. "These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon. ... Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence. Let North and South — let all Americans — let all lovers of liberty everywhere, join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but shall have so saved it, as to make and keep it forever worthy of saving."

"I love Lincoln," Murray said. "His words are so current and so relevant."

As student Jennifer Hedger played "Taps" and a cannon shot was fired three times, Oddfellow Lou Davoli of Redwood City talked about honoring the veterans of past wars. His wife's uncle died in World War II, and his cousin died in the South Pacific during the same war.

Just as the ceremony at Union Cemetery was coming to a close at 11 a.m., the American Legion Post 375 was starting another ceremony at Alta Mesa Memorial Park,

where American flags lining the road through the cemetery snapped sharply in the stiff breeze.

More than 50 people attended, including veterans William H. Pettis, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was on the ship that followed the Enola Gay on its lethal mission to Hiroshima, and Navy Cmdr. Verlin de Gruy, who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Kuwait.

"I've been coming here for 20 years," said Donald Ownbey, a Veterans Affairs chaplain. "We're here to honor the dead, but also to give support to their families," he said.

One of Monday's participants was a woman whose son died in Vietnam. She couldn't get to Arlington Cemetery, where he was buried, but she made it out to Alta Mesa.

Ownbey pointed out that not all of the veterans buried there were men. "Lu Lehrman, a Civil War nurse who was 106 years old, was recently buried here," he said.

At Union Cemetery, the meaning of the day was not lost on Selby Lane School students, who had just finished singing "This Land is Your Land" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"

"It's about all the soldiers that died in the wars," said fourth-grader Thomas Gomez. "It's about peace," his twin brother, Robert, added.

Nancy Elzey, whose daughter Rebecca participated in the ceremony, said, "I think it's wonderful that the day is set aside to remember those who fought for the freedom of America. It's about keeping America free and remembering that America started out striving to see that everyone is treated equal."

With the words taken right out of her mouth, 9-year-old Rebecca added all that was left to say: "I think it feels good to sing for America and for the people who died."

5/26/92

RC Cemeteries

# 133-year-old cemetery to be studied, preserved

Janet McGovern  
PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

5/26/92

Volunteers will use high-tech topography maps to inventory Redwood City's Union Cemetery historic site June 6, in what is expected to be the first accurate survey

of the six-acre pioneer burial ground.

A step in the preparation of a cultural resources management plan for the 133-year-old cemetery, the inventory is organized by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. Ramon Aguilar, ana-

lyst with the department, is project manager for the historic survey.

Peak and Associates, an archaeological consulting firm from Sacramento, will give volunteers two hours of hands-on instruction beginning at 8:30 a.m. There are an estimated 200 markers ex-

tant despite nearly 100 years of neglect and vandalism and the property is one of five cemeteries in California listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a California Historical Landmark.

Please see **CEMETERY B-3**

## CEMETERY / 2,000 burials registered

CONTINUED FROM B-1

The first burial was in 1859. There were more than 2,000 registered burials and about 150 disinterments before Redwood City prohibited burials in the 1950s. The burial register reflects the commercial activities and families of lumbering and shipping activities in Searsville, Woodside and the county seat in Redwood City.

A topographical map was prepared earlier this year by Brian-Kangas-Foult of Redwood City, which made a substantial contribution toward its cost, according to Aguilar.

Surveyors used photogrammetric methods supplemented by field surveys with laser equipment, a far cry from the cemetery's original metes-and-bounds property description.

"We are following federal guidelines in hiring an archaeological consultant and the information we obtain will be prepared for computer analysis," Aguilar said.

"The completed inventory will help the city plan historic preservation and future use and maintenance."

Since 1983, the city has installed new fencing, light, water lines, some landscaping and a new entry off of Woodside Road. With im-

provements and several major clean-ups at the site, interest in Union Cemetery has revived.

Neglected but for sporadic attempts at maintenance since the Union Cemetery Association held its final meeting nearly 100 years ago, the cemetery was acquired by the city in 1964.

Through the years, members of American Legion Post 105 continued the Memorial Day services at the Grand Army of the Republic plot where there are an estimated 40 Civil War veterans buried.

The Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library Inc. in 1979 initiated preparation of the application for the National Register, which was approved in 1983.

Aguilar is asking those who want to volunteer for the June 6 survey to register by June 1. All supplies will be furnished, including film for photos.

He emphasized that there will be no subsurface digging, that all features of the cemetery will remain in place for the survey and that volunteers should wear appropriate clothing, including knee pads if available.

Sign-up sheets are available at the Parks, Recreation and Community Services office at 1400 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City. The phone number is (415) 780-7250.

5/26/1992

# Memorial Day rite set at Union Cemetery

Janet McGovern  
PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

5/21/92

A traditional observance that dates back to the last century will be repeated Monday in a patriotic Memorial Day tribute at Redwood City's Union Cemetery.

The 10 a.m. observance will feature singing, reading, speeches and placement of flowers on graves.

Union Cemetery is on Woodside Road, just west of El Camino Real. Established in 1859, it is the only cemetery in California on the National Register of Historic Places that is not tied to a church, according to Jean Cloud, who has long been active in historic preservation.

What makes the cemetery unique is its Civil War soldiers' plot, she said.

In recording oral histories of old-timers in the city, Cloud said they used to talk about Memorial Day observances from the 1890s, and even before. Redwood City residents, some of them Civil War

RC - Cemetery

## MONDAY SERVICES

**10 a.m. Union Cemetery,** Woodside Road west of El Camino Real, Redwood City.

**11 a.m. Alta Mesa Memorial Park,** 695 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto.

**11 a.m. Holy Cross Cemetery,** Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park.

**11 a.m. Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery,** 22555 Cristo Rey Drive, Los Altos.

veterans, would meet at a theater on Broadway and march down Main Street to the cemetery.

There, they would sing patriotic songs and young girls would decorate the soldiers' graves. Afterwards, the children were given ice cream.

"Of course they didn't have the (Woodside Road) overpass then," Cloud said. Today there is too much traffic to walk to the cemetery.

In those days, families tended the graves themselves, bringing a trowel and digging weeds. The Memorial Day observance apparently stopped around World War I, but the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Library revived it eight years ago.

The observance this year will include a talk by City Councilman Jack Murray on Abraham Lincoln, singing by Selby Lane School students and recitations by Kennedy Middle School and John Gill School students.

A Sequoia High School senior will sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." As in the days of old, children will place flowers on the soldiers' plot and get ice cream.

The ceremony will conclude with "Taps" and the firing of three shots from a cannon.

Several organizations have offered help and support, including the Park, Recreation and Community Services Department, the Redwood City School District, the Heritage Association, and many local clubs and groups.

The California Highway Patrol, meanwhile, is urging people to drive safely for the Memorial Day weekend and urging vacationers to get an early start this afternoon to avoid traffic congestion.

Sgt. Pat Tracy said extra officers will be out on the highways from this afternoon to early Tuesday morning, but they don't plan on setting up any sobriety checkpoints.

"Of course, we're stressing to not drink and drive, report those that do, buckle up, and obey the speed laws," she said. "The reason that we stress them all the time is they do work."

She also said if people decide to drink alcohol, they should choose a designated driver.

As for the weather, forecasters expect a sunny weekend.

Wilfred Pi, a forecaster for the National Weather Service in Redwood City, said it should be pretty warm all the way through the weekend in the Peninsula, with temperatures in the 80s.

## CORRECTIONS

*It is the Times Tribune's policy to correct all significant errors. Readers are urged to call mistakes to our attention by writing to Associate Editor Paul Savoia at 245 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto 94301, or telephoning the city desk at (415) 853-5286.*



# RC cemetery conflict

SM Times  
5/14/1993

By HEIDI VAN ZANT

Times Staff Writer

REDWOOD CITY— Those buried in Union Cemetery may be resting in peace — but not the living who are debating the future of the historic site.

City officials soon will be deciding which faction of the historical community will prevail, after years of behind-the-scenes disharmony.

"We are all sick of the conflict around this issue," said Susan Swope, a member of the Park and Recreation Commission that will take the matter up next month.

## far from dead

### Feud over future of historic Union Cemetery heats up

Instead of rallying to save a treasure that is the only cemetery in San Mateo County listed on the National Register of Historic Places, she said the key figures "are at each other's throats."

"What drives me crazy is they care so deeply about it — yet they are standing in the way of getting anything done," Swope said.

In one camp is the volunteer group that wants to

get to work straight away on restoring plots in the six-acre site on Woodside Road, just west of El Camino Real.

The Historic Union Cemetery Association said it's fed up with letting vandals and bureaucrats have their way while the cemetery falls apart.

On the other side are those who say the cemetery's landmark status could be lost if amateur volunteers — no

## Cemetery

Continued from Page One

Cemetery, which has been heavily vandalized over the years.

Now the city is moving into the second phase — which is to determine whether and how the plots themselves should be fixed.

"The issue is doing the right thing for the cemetery. I don't feel comfortable with a piecemeal approach," he said this week.

The simmering controversy over the future of the cemetery is coming to a head because the Planning Commission has granted approval to the volunteer group's plans to restore the Cooley plot, the last picket-fenced plot in Union Cemetery.

That recommendation must be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, which is expected to take the matter up June 23.

Griffiths warned that those who try to restore the cemetery without full city approval will be stopped.

But Jean Cloud, one of the founders of the nonprofit group recently formed to save the cemetery, said the issue is bigger than one city official who wants to wait for a plan.

"Peter Griffiths is not the 'king' of Union Cemetery," Cloud said. "Peter Griffiths is not going to stop anything out there."

When she pleads her case before the Park and

Recreation Commission, Cloud said she will tell them her group is working with the proper federal and state officials on how to restore the Cooley plot.

She wants to put her volunteer stone masons, wrought iron workers and carpenters to work, using a 10-year-old landscaping plan the city already has.

"Now it looks like nobody cares about Union Cemetery — tombs lying down and fences strewn. The cemetery deteriorates while this (controversy) goes on. We want it restored," she said.

But county parks and recreation commissioner Nita Spangler — who like Cloud is a longtime Redwood City resident with an abiding interest in history — has had a falling out with Cloud over Union Cemetery because she wants an overall plan first.

She believes that plan should show Union Cemetery becoming more "park-like" instead of spending scarce funds on a full restoration.

"It would be a quiet area to come and sit. A cemetery is lots of things to lots of people," she said. "This is very nice open space in a highly urbanized area."

City Manager Ed Everett, who supports delaying work until a plan can be prepared, said Thursday it's regrettable that two women who care so much about the cemetery are at such odds.

"I hope they stay focused on what they want to do and not who they are," he said.

matter how well-meaning — touch the fallen tombstones without a professional restoration plan in hand.

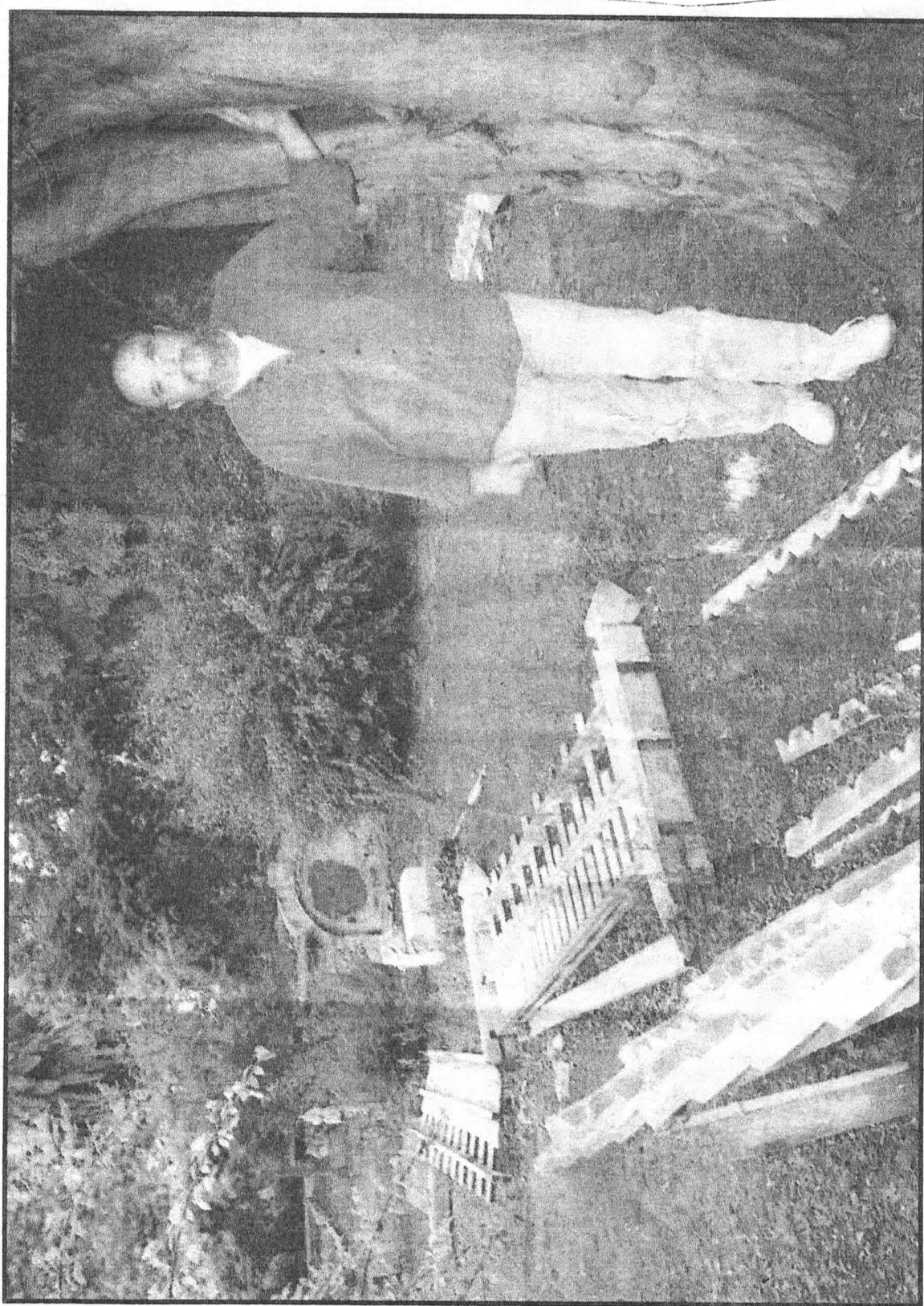
Union Cemetery is the final resting place for more than 2,000 people, including some of the county's earliest and most prominent citizens.

The city-owned site, which dates back to 1859, contains some of the best examples of Victorian funerary art in the area and is a rich resource for those studying the pioneer lumber families.

Parks director Peter Griffiths said the city already has spent \$160,000 on fencing and a new entrance for Union

See CEMETERY, Page A2

SM Times 5/14/1993



John Edmonds of the Historic Union Cemetery Association wants to restore the Cooley plot at the Redwood City cemetery. JOHN GREEN/The Times

RG - Union Cemetery

SM Times 5/14/1993

# Volunteers Hope to

By Lorna Fernandes  
Chronicle Correspondent

With its toppled headstones, weed-strewn grounds and dilapidated fences, Redwood City's Union Cemetery does not look like a national historical site. But a group of local volunteers is trying to restore it to its former glory.

The six-acre triangle of land nestled between Woodside Road, a nursery and a row of apartment complexes holds more than 2,000 coffins dating back to the mid-1800s, including the grave sites of about 50 men who fought in the Civil War.

The cemetery was made a California Historical Landmark in 1987

## Historic Redwood City cemetery is in dire need of restoration

and was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, but the graveyard continued to be ignored.

It was not always that way, remembers Vincent Torres, 75, whose family has lived across from the cemetery since he was 5 years old.

"It looked like people cared," Torres said as he walked through the unkempt graveyard. "There would be people there every weekend."

Stopping to examine a wooden tombstone that wind and water have stripped of every marking, Torres shook his head with remorse.

### 'No One is Remembering'

"Someone put these up so these people could be remembered," he said sadly. "It seems like no one is remembering them. It seems like they are abandoned."

That is expected to change next month when volunteers from the

# Bring Burial Ground to Life

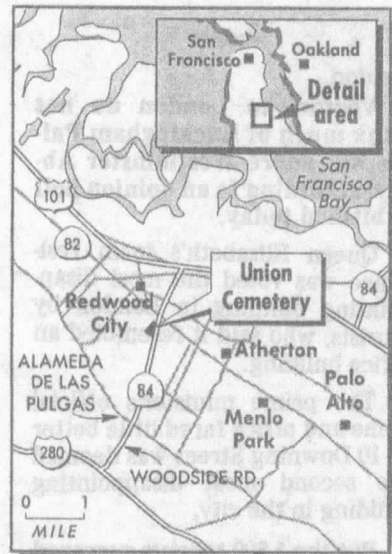
Historic Union Cemetery Association take the first steps toward returning the site to its former splendor.

Torres, who has a passion for archeology, jumped at the chance to be involved in the project, which will start with the restoration of the century-old Cooley family plot in the northern corner of the cemetery.

With the help of other volunteers, Torres hopes to take apart the crumbling redwood picket fence bordering the Cooley plot, strengthen it and paint it white.

The land for Union Cemetery was purchased in 1859, making it the first legal rural cemetery in

**CEMETERY:** Page A9 Col. 4



CHRONICLE GRAPHIC



BY BRANT WARD/THE CHRONICLE

Restoration advocate Helen Graves walked through Redwood City's 134-year-old Union Cemetery

# CEMETERY: Restoration of Historic Graveyard

From Page A8

California, said Helen Graves, a member of the Historic Union Cemetery Association.

"Other recognized cemeteries were attached to churches, but this was the only one that stood alone," she said.

The Union Cemetery Association, the small group that bought the property in 1859, deeded it to the state, with California Governor John Weller as a trustee. The state returned the cemetery to Redwood City in 1962.

Many local fraternal and benevolent organizations selected plots in which to bury their members. One such group was the Grand Army of the Republic, the organization for Union veterans of the Civil War.

A life-sized statue of a Union

soldier once marked the plot containing the Civil War grave sites, but repeated vandalism forced the city to remove the statue. It is now in storage, awaiting restoration.

Every Memorial Day, the American Legion holds a service, complete with color guard, commemorating the buried soldiers. Local children pay tribute by singing patriotic songs and reciting the Gettysburg Address.

### Master Plan Needed

There have been several suggestions about how to refurbish the decaying landmark, but although small projects are approved by Redwood City's Historic Resources Advisory Committee, any major plans for the cemetery will have to wait until a master plan has been approved, said Charles Jany, senior planner for the city.

Nita Spangler, a San Mateo

County park commissioner and a Redwood City resident for 49 years, said that in keeping with the Victorian spirit of the cemetery, she would like to see it made into a park.

"It was a Victorian idea to go to a burial ground and commune with nature and contemplate the people who were there before," Spangler said.

Jean Cloud, a Redwood City resident for 51 years and chair of the Historic Union Cemetery Association, would like to see a master plan approved but wants to begin working on small projects until then.

Torres says action must be swift.

"Mother Nature takes everything back that we don't want," Torres said, "so if we don't work fast, this won't even be here."

RC - ~~Union~~ Cemetery

San Francisco Chronicle

# BAY AREA/CALIFORNIA

**PENINSULA**  
EDITION

## Volunteers Hope to Bring Burial Ground to Life

By Lorna Fernandes  
Chronicle Correspondent

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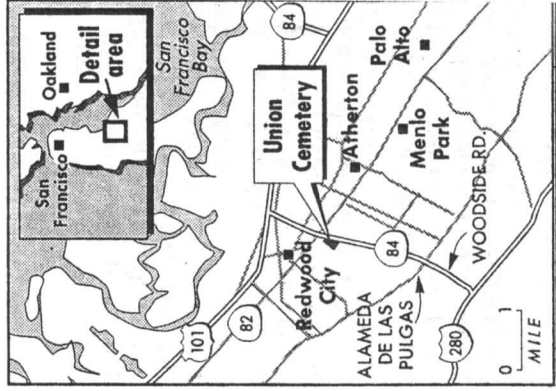
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Historic Union Cemetery Association take the first steps toward re- turning the site to its former splen- dor.

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CHRONICLE GRAPHIC

7/26/1993

1 of 2



BY BRANT WARD/THE CHRONICLE

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SUSAN GARRISON/TRIBUNE

**Redwood City resident Jean Cloud sits by the grave of Loviah Starr, one of Union Cemetery's more prominent residents. The Redwood City Council recently honored Cloud and the Historic Union Cemetery Association for their efforts in restoring the site.**

## RC Burial Ground Honored

By Leslie Baikie

Listening to longtime Redwood City resident Jean Cloud talk about Loviah Starr, one would think they were the best of friends.

Cloud knows detailed accounts of Starr's struggle while crossing the Plains with her family. She was even entrusted with an intimate letter written by Starr to her husband.

Cloud wasn't Starr's best friend, but a friend nonetheless because she brings dignity and respect to Starr's grave site at the Historic Union Cemetery, located on Woodside Road in

Redwood City.

It was this care and concern for the entire cemetery that prompted the Redwood City Council to award the Historic Union Cemetery Association (HUCA) with the Seventh Annual Mayor's Beautification Award for the Best Historical Renovation of 1994.

"I really feel like I know a lot of the people buried there," said Cloud, president of the HUCA. "Even though most of them died more than a 100 years ago, through researching and making contact with some of their families, I really do

know a lot about their lives."

Cloud describes Starr as a strong woman from Ohio, who traveled across the Plains to California with her husband and three children in the 1850s.

Starr's great-granddaughter, Joanne O'Donnell, entrusted Cloud with one of her grandmother's private letters, which is included in the Redwood City Archives at the Main Library.

In the letter, Starr urges her husband to take their three children back to Ohio in case

**See UNION, PAGE 6A**

RCT 7.13.94

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# Local Residents Revive

## •UNION

From Page 1A

something happened to her.

In 1868, Starr died at the age of 34 from an unknown illness that Cloud speculates was typhoid fever. Against Starr's wishes, the children were split up and sent to live with different aunts after her death.

"Many years ago, Starr's great-granddaughter sent a yellow silk wreath to be placed on her grandmother's grave site for Memorial Day," Cloud said. "After placing it there, I took it home because I figured vandals would steal it, but I bring it back every Memorial Day to celebrate her life."

Last March, Cloud helped establish the HUCA, a non-profit organization devoted to restoring, preserving and maintaining the pioneer grave sites.

The HUCA's efforts are dedicated to the memory of the lives of the San Mateo County

pioneers who are buried there. It also promotes educational programs and sponsors events of historical value to the community.

Although the Redwood City Parks and Recreation Department and the Community Services Department are responsible for the cemetery's operation and maintenance, volunteers still spend ample time there.

"The third Saturday of every month, volunteers pull weeds, prune trees and trim the brush, just like years ago when people took care of their own families' gravesites," Cloud said.

"The cemetery has suffered so," she continued. "The elegant fences which surround the cemetery were all rusting before we came. Vandals had knocked over tombstones and scribbled graffiti all over the cemetery, but we've straightened up the stones and put them back on their bases."

The cemetery is a registered

member of the National Registry of Historic Places, which is a mark of distinction because no other cemetery is so honored.

A campaign to restore the historic unknown soldier's statue, which is in storage due to vandalism, is currently underway.

"You can still tell what it was originally like," Cloud said. "The head is still intact, but it desperately needs to be restored. We might consider purchasing a replica, as well."

According to Cloud, the HUCA cannot act alone on any cemetery matters. Its officials must consult the National Cemetery Association, the Redwood City Parks and Recreation Department and the Redwood City Historic Advisory Committee, of which Cloud is a member, before deciding on an appropriate fundraiser.

"We may sell T-shirts or coffee mugs to raise money for the restoration or hold some other kind of fund-raiser," Cloud said. "Whatever we do, we have to maintain the integrity of the cemetery or we could be taken off the National Registry."

Union Cemetery was established in 1859 by pioneers who formed the Union Cemetery Association to sell burial plots. The property was deeded to the governor of California and the state maintained it until 1918.

After this time, the property was left unattended and became grossly neglected. Weeds and brush covered the graves, vandals regularly knocked over tombstones and used the redwood crosses for firewood.

Although it technically wasn't in operation, local undertakers still used the site for burials. In fact, during the



7.13-94

# Historic Union Cemetery

Great Depression, many of San Mateo County's poor were buried there.

In 1962, the state placed the cemetery in trust to Redwood City.

Forty Civil War veterans are buried in the cemetery, including 2,000 to 3,000 unmarked and documented graves on 6 acres of land.

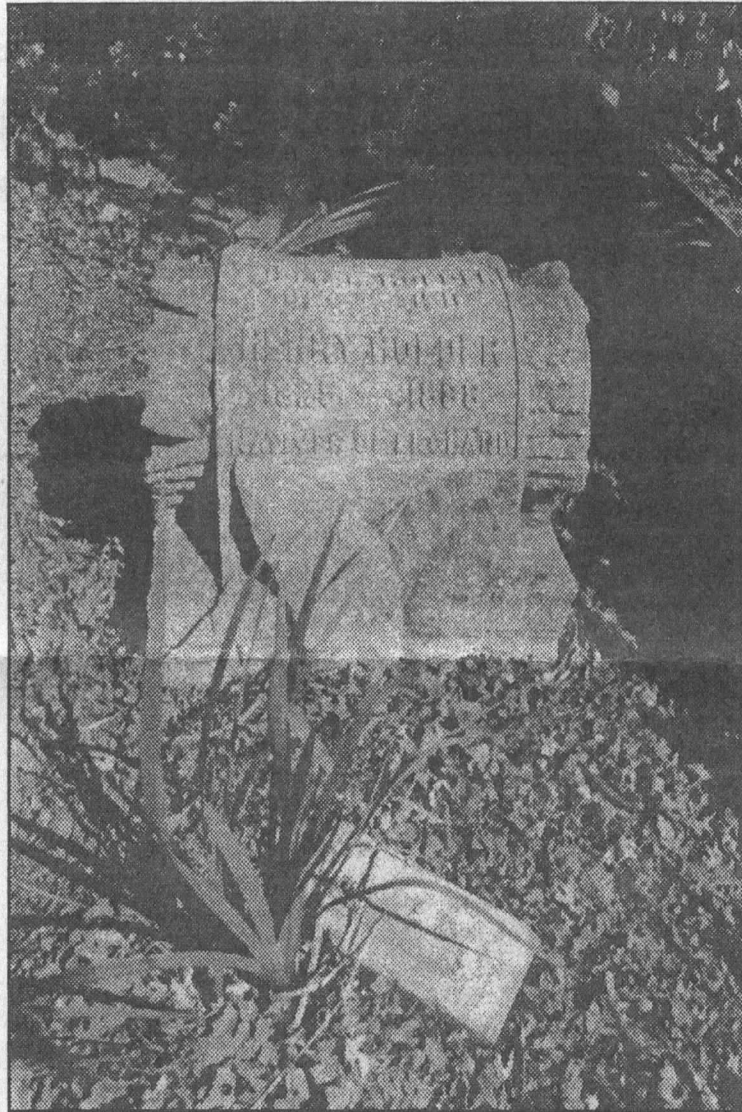
Noteworthy historians buried in the cemetery include John Sears (1823-1907), an early pioneer of the town that was named after him, Searsville; Sarah Wallis (1825-1905), the mother of the women's right movement in California; and the honorable Benjamin F. Fox (1804-1869), San Mateo County's first judge.

"It's so nice that we were given an award," Cloud said. "All the volunteers work so hard to make it a nice place. There's never been so much love and dedication to any project."

For more information regarding HUCA memberships, volunteer programs or donations, contact Jean Cloud at 366-0488 or write the HUCA at P.O. Box 610033, Redwood City, CA 94061.

Other beautification awards were presented to the following Redwood City residents: Terrane N. and Donna Church, the most beautiful garden/landscape; Anita Barbitta, best maintained garden/landscape; Celia and Salvador Gonzalez, best architectural design; Noreen and Robert Solari, best remodeled house.

Virginia and Robert Nurisso, best compatible building and garden/landscape; Frank and Liza Bizzaro, best architectural design; Patricia Dixon, best maintained garden/landscape;



SUSAN GARRISON/TRIBUNE

**The grave site of Redwood City's first known permanent resident, William Holder, and his brother, Henry.**

Father Vern Jones, most beautiful garden/landscape; Jodi and William Garehime, most unique use of space; Ian and Jenesta Ferguson, best

conversion to low water usage garden/landscape; and Bob Oyster, best historical renovation for the Fitzpatrick Building.



# Cemetery racked by vandalism



JIM GENSHEIMER — MERCURY NEWS

Roger Hoffman, a homeless man, keeps dry at Union Cemetery in Redwood City. Headstone, top right, was damaged by vandals.

## Volunteers are striving to preserve site

BY SANDY KLEFFMAN  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Despite strenuous scrubbing with a toothbrush, Mike O'Brien has been unable to erase all

the lime-green gang graffiti that mars the historic tombstones at Redwood City's Union Cemetery.

Because the gravestones are made of a porous material, O'Brien estimates it will be 20 years before the modern-day markings disappear, including one of a giant marijuana leaf.

Using a stronger brush is out of the question because it would damage the aging stones.

"This is a historical site and it should be treated with love and reverence," said Jean Cloud, president of the Historic Union Cemetery Association, shaking her head. "The history of this area lies right here in this cemetery."

Cloud and O'Brien are members of a small band of volunteers who lovingly care for the picturesque graveyard, home to at least 2,300 of the European

and American settlers who died in the area between 1859 and 1954. The cemetery is a state of California landmark and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Many of the volunteers have no relatives buried there, and none receive compensation for their labors. But all share a fondness for the serene six-acre

1 of 2 See CEMETERY, Page 2B

5305c New  
Measures  
11/28/94

# Volunteers looking after cemetery

## ■ CEMETERY

from Page 1B

site on Woodside Road just west of El Camino Real, where palm and oak trees shade the poignant tombstones that provide insight into a bygone era.

In one corner, a grave site for a young child is surrounded by a white iron fence made to look like a crib, including a blue pacifier and an array of toys inside.

There are towering monuments for Civil War veterans and prominent settlers from places like Germany, England and Scotland, and a tiny marker for 2-year-old Mary, who died in 1872. "A sweet little child, with bright sunny eyes," the monument reads, "a treasure on earth, a gem in the skies."

Visitors still can see the gaping hole where Simon Mezes, the lawyer who laid out the first map of Redwood City in 1854, was buried. His outraged descendants dug up his body in 1954 and moved him to another cemetery when county officials decided to

build a Hall of Justice and Records on land he had dedicated as a permanent park.

"People who have lived in Redwood City a long time have a special place in their heart for this (cemetery)," O'Brien said. "As teen-agers, they probably came out here and had some adventures."

Yet for every volunteer, it seems, there are an equal number of people who have no qualms about trashing the place.

Throughout the cemetery, statues have been beheaded and monuments knocked off their bases. Many sit far from the grave site they originally marked. A tombstone for 4-year-old Annie Douglass, who died in 1859, now lies atop the grave of someone who appears to have been at least 6 feet tall.

Volunteers pick up cottage cheese containers and bags of crackers left by a homeless man who sometimes spends the night in the cemetery. Then there were the people who set off fireworks and ignited the century-old palm

trees.

"We were on our way to a city council meeting to accept a beautification award and the cemetery was on fire," O'Brien recalls.

When Cloud visited the site several years ago after learning that some of her husband's relatives were buried there, she found it "in wrack and ruin. Nobody cared for it." Later she was appalled to discover that some people wanted to do away with the graveyard and put a Little League baseball diamond there.

So she and others began a lengthy campaign to get Union Cemetery included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Last year, she helped form the 80-member Historic Union Cemetery Association to restore the landmark. The task is daunting, but volunteers have made significant progress.

One Saturday each month, members gather to pick up trash, plant thorny rose bushes near the fences to prevent vandals from climbing over them, remove graffiti, restore rusted iron fences

and prune trees.

O'Brien spends hours caring for the wide variety of rose bushes on the property. Some, more than 100 years old and considered very rare, are from cuttings brought from back East on covered wagons.

Other members pour over old obituaries and burial records trying to discover where displaced markers belong. Plans also are under way to restore broken tombstones and coat them with a thin layer of wax so graffiti can be easily removed.

"People nowadays don't have much opportunity to think about the past," Cloud said. "But the past has contributed to what we are today."

"More and more people are coming out to see what's going on," O'Brien said.

## IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

To find out more about the Historic Union Cemetery Association, call Jean Cloud at (415) 366-0488.

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